**Proposal Precis**
**The New Whole Earth Catalog**
Rev. 1.0, August 18, 2003

## Overview

- A seasoned team of publishing entrepreneurs is recommending the development of a new Whole Earth Catalog.
- The editorial vision builds on Whole Earth's historical strengths, updated for today.
- Editorial development, production, and sales will be handled by a team of freelancers under the direction of the Proposal Team.
- The financial plan will be built on the groundwork already done for the publication.
- The proposal team consists of Gary A. Bolles, James Daly, and Kevin Jones

## Vision

The Whole Earth brand is one of the most widely recognized in the areas of sustainability and holistic living. Over the years, Whole Earth Magazine and the Whole Earth Catalogs have taught thousands of readers how to create sustainable lifestyles using products and services to enhance their lives. Even though no catalog has been published in years, and even though the magazine is currently dormant, Whole Earth retains a tremendous amount of brand recognition and brand equity, especially on the West Coast.

Leveraging this brand equity, a revitalized Whole Earth has the opportunity to become a leading publication focused on some of the most important issues facing society and planet today. Whole Earth's traditional core themes of sustainability and holistic lifestyles must be retained, but they need to be extended to a variety of other issues that are critical to today's reader. These include:

- A global awareness
- An active – if not an activist – mentality toward critical issues related to the planet and society
- An openness to using purchasing power to effect change

Any Whole Earth initiative must have a strong editorial sensibility. It must take a stand on the issues it cares about, offering passionate perspectives designed to educate and motivate. It must have a point of view, and must be against certain issues as it is for other issues. But it must retain a sense of fun, engaging the reader, avoiding simply trying to beat the reader over the head.

Any Whole Earth print or online offering needs to include a variety of editorial articles on a range of issues; "cool tools" and other products that fit readers' lifestyles and goals; and targeted advertisements intended specifically for its main reader. (See "Product" below.) If Whole Earth can provide this kind of product to readers, it can once again become a major brand, with offerings that include a catalog, a regular publication, events, and related offerings.

## Core Readership

The new Whole Earth Catalog's core reader shares a number of characteristics with the publication's traditional reader. However, WEM's traditional readership has aged over time, and it is essential that the new readership skew more strongly toward college age to late thirties. This means a much younger sensibility than has been the publication's focus before.

The new reader has many similar characteristics to "cultural creatives," a psychographic defined in a book of the same name by Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson (http://www.culturalcreatives.org). The authors claimed that 50 million people worldwide fit into this category, and that there are numerous defining characteristics, including:

- Are strongly aware of the problems of the whole planet (global warming, destruction of rainforests, overpopulation, lack of ecological sustainability, exploitation of people in poorer countries) and want to see more action on them, such as limiting economic growth
- Care intensely about both psychological and spiritual development
- See spirituality or religion as important in your life, but are concerned about the role of the Religious Right in politics
- Want more equality for women at work, and more women leaders in business and politics
- Want our politics and government spending to put more emphasis on children's education and well-being, on rebuilding our neighborhoods and communities, and on creating an ecologically sustainable future
- Are unhappy with both the Left and the Right in politics, and want a to find a new way that is not in the mushy middle
- Tend to be somewhat optimistic about our future, and distrust the cynical and pessimistic view that is given by the media
- Are concerned about what the big corporations are doing in the name of making more profits: downsizing, creating environmental problems, and exploiting poorer countries
- Dislike all the emphasis in modern culture on success and "making it," on getting and spending, on wealth and luxury goods
- Like people and places that are exotic and foreign, and like experiencing and learning about other ways of life.
- Would pay more taxes or pay more for consumer goods if you could know the money would go to clean up the environment and to stop global warming

Playing off this last point, a Whole Earth initiative would add:

- Are motivated to use purchasing power to effect change

Readers run the gamut from interested to passionate about these issues. But the publication must itself be passionate, to establish a strong stand on issues, to serve as a lightning rod for readers.

**Product**

From a variety of perspectives, the most viable opportunity for rejuvenating the brand is through a catalog offering that melds the best of Whole Earth's traditional strengths with a newer sensibility designed to broaden its appeal and audience. Such a catalog can illustrate all that is unique about Whole Earth, in an economically feasible package that allows an editorial, production, and sales team to focus on a single issue, rather than trying to commit funds for a long-term business before its economical viability can be established.

The first new Whole Earth Catalog will include editorially-consistent articles, online and offline resources, product listings, and advertisements. A wide range of topics will be covered in each issue, with specific focus on perhaps a half-dozen major topics. These major topics will each have a more complete treatment, and will be designed to inform, educate and motivate readers. The exact mix of advertisements and sponsored content versus editorial content will need to be determined.

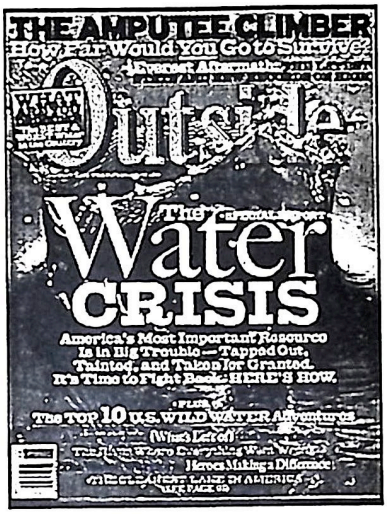
*Major Topic Example: Water*

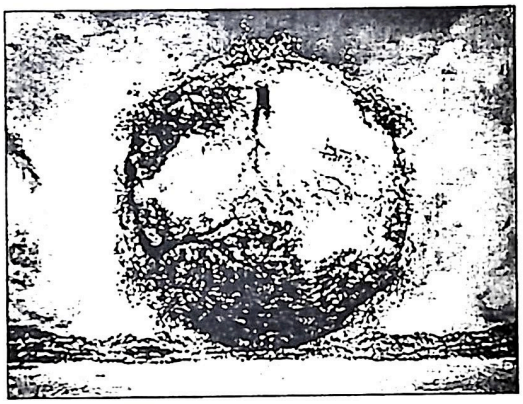
A good example of topic treatment can be found in the August issue of Outside magazine (http://outside.away.com/outside/features/200308/200308_watersplash.html). Thought Outside is typically geared toward the adventure traveler, a large portion of the issue focused on the state of the nation's water supply.

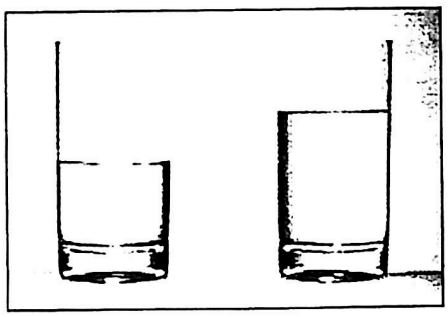
- Main article: American Waters: A Resource in Peril
- A national water quality analysis and map
- How water rights battles are shaping the quality of water in key areas
- Inspiring water initiative victories (though a number of these are more focused on adventure traveler rights)
- And, perhaps most importantly, Jump In: How to Get Involved

This last is key: Activism has to be a regular and visible characteristic of Whole Earth. However, several other content components are also necessary, including:

- Products you can buy that provide or promote clean water
- International stories about water issues
- Web sites for learning more, contributing to water issues, etc.





**Distribution**

The revitalized Whole Earth catalog needs to be designed and produced as a book, and distributed through traditional book channels. This necessitates a publishing partner that will bring distribution relationships. However, Whole Earth also has the opportunity to leverage potential sponsors (see below) that can defray costs and expand the numbers of points of sale.

**Advertising/Sponsorships**

Media buyers are increasingly trying to gain access to constituencies that have been historically difficult to locate. The young-to-mid-forties adult, affluent, socially-conscious demographic is a choice one for advertisers, due to their broad-ranging awareness and purchasing power. The Whole Earth Catalog has the opportunity to provide access to this important group, offering a wide range of advertisers a flexible marketing vehicle.

Of course, any Whole Earth initiative won't stand alone in the marketplace – but this can potentially be more of a help than a hindrance. The topics that a Whole Earth Catalog can focus on are growing in visibility across the nation, and are already capturing the attention of a broad range of readers of competitive publications. Utne Reader, Mother Jones, Gaiam Lifestyle, and Real Simple, to name a few, show the rising popularity of information products focused on holistic lifestyles. The existence of these publications helps to establish a category that sponsors and advertisers can readily recognize, saving the need to evangelize Whole Earth's focus. The historical name recognition and positive associations of Whole Earth gives advertisers and sponsors the opportunity to get in on the ground floor of the re-launch of a major brand.

Beyond traditional advertising, however, one of the greatest opportunities for the Catalog is to leverage both sponsors who can also serve as distributors. A variety of regional and national corporations such as Starbucks and Whole Foods have brands closely associated with sustainability and holistic lifestyle practices, and have physical distribution capabilities that make them extremely attractive as launch partners.

**Team**

The initial Proposal Team consists of three seasoned publishing professionals with a strong track record of building successful publications. They include:

- James Daly has spent more than 20 years in business journalism and is now a consulting editor with Forbes. Previously, he conceptualized and led the launch of Business 2.0, an international biweekly business magazine. Launched in July 1998, Business 2.0 had a paid circulation of 350,000, six international editions and won more than a dozen editorial awards, including the Folio: Editorial Excellence Award for Best Business/Finance Publication three years in a row. In 2000, Business 2.0 was also a National Magazine Awards finalist in the category of General Excellence. He served as Editor in Chief and Editorial Director at Business 2.0 until the publication was sold to AOL Time Warner in July 2001. Daly received his Bachelor of Science, cum laude, in Journalism and Economics from Boston University. He also has a degree from the New England School of Photography, and has done postgraduate work in economics and international relations at Harvard University.

- Kevin Jones is editorial director of Every Voice Network, a faith based peace and justice newsletter and community site run by his family foundation. He is also active in social enterprise and the integrated capital market, seeking through his Collective Intelligence.net partnership to accelerate the flow of capital to good. He serves on the boards or as an advisor to several non-profits, including Social Enterprise Alliance.

  His last business was Net Market Makers, an $18 million (revenues) online community, research and events company he sold to Jupiter Media Metrix in early Spring of 2000. He has been a columnist for Forbes ASAP, written for the New York Times, and was a columnist for and on the advisory board of Business 2.0. A serial entrepreneur Jones and his wife, the Rev. Rosa Lee Harden, started or bought and sold seven successful businesses including a

business journal, trade journals and weekly newspapers and a trade show. He started the first web-based legislative and regulatory monitoring service in the U.S, which was profitable from its launch in the fall of 1974. For three years he hosted a weekly business TV show on an NBC affiliate and had a radio new program syndicated on more than 35 stations. He is also a founding partner of Collective Intelligence (www.collectiveintelligence.net), consulting group coordinating projects to help accelerate the flow of capital to social ventures and investment intermediaries.

- Gary A. Bolles (gary@gbolles.com) is an independent consultant and writer based in San Francisco. He was the founding editor-in-chief of Interactive Week, developing its unique vision; the founding editorial director Sm@rt Reseller (later, Sm@rt Partner) magazine, creating the publication from initial research; and the founding editorial director of Yahoo! Internet Life, managing its successful launch. Bolles was also the Editor-in-Chief of Network Computing Magazine, and for one year was the host of "Working the Web" for TechTV, covering a wide variety of technology-related topics.

  Bolles is the former Chief Operating Officer of Evolve Software, Inc., and the former VP of Marketing for Network Products Corporation. He is currently a partner in Collective Intelligence (www.collectiveintelligence.net), consulting group coordinating projects to help accelerate the flow of capital to social ventures and investment intermediaries. He currently consults to a variety of organizations on strategy and marketing, and is a contributing editor to CIO Insight, writing on a broad range of technology subjects, and assisting in the coordination of the publication's research efforts.

**Plan Development**

A number of operational issues need to be resolved in a subsequent business planning process. Ideally, development of a full Business Plan would be funded through a financing initiative from current Whole Earth readers and other funding sources. The Plan would include a project timeline and a full budget, building off of the substantial amount of quality work that has already been done.